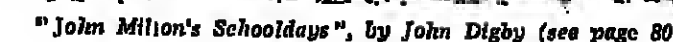


FRIDAY • 27 JANUARY 1978 • No 3.957 • 25p

Drawing the poverty line

Uses and abuses of author-bibliography



THE TIMES NEWSPAPER
LIMITED, 1978

The vice in virtue

By A. H. T. Levi

PHILIP E. LEWIS:
La Rochefoucauld
The Art of Abstraction
201pp. Cornell University Press
(distributed by International Book
Distributors). £7.50.

La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* are normally considered a fascinating but difficult work. In fact the meaning is clear enough, even if there is carefully contrived ambiguity. By using the term *amour-propre*, La Rochefoucauld knew that his readers would assume that he was suggesting the selfishness of much apparently virtuous activity, since his generation took *amour-propre* to be the *amor sui* which Augustine, in Jansen's interpretation, had made absolutely incompatible with grace or virtue.

However, he also used for self-interest the term *intérêt*, which he clearly did allow to be compatible with altruistic virtue. The *Maximes* were intended to provoke, and even to tease. After all, they started off as a salon game and were originally intended for the amusement of friends and acquaintances, many of whom they were successfully designed to shock, and some of

whom they were also successfully designed to dupe. To all of them they suggested that apparently virtuous behaviour might be sinful and in some that only grudgingly inspired activity could authenticate virtue, while carefully refraining from a formal statement of either view. They are also tentative. Not all of them can be reconciled with the others. There is no fixed viewpoint, and few commentators have seized on the combination of flexibility with the desire to tease.

Philip E. Lewis, who edits *Diogenes*, has lavished a high degree of intelligence on the *Maximes*, but has chosen an inappropriate text for structural analysis. The result is unhelpfully precise and not very informative. Much space is devoted to discussing the views of modern authors, of which the most prominent are Roland Barthes, Francis Jameson, and Jean Starobinski, the most important, N. Ivanoff and Louise Ansmann, are never referred to. The historical setting, the possibility of Jansenist influence, the *précieux* background, are not properly considered, and above all this work suffers from the inability of purely structuralist criticism to react sensitively to linguistic register. If La Rochefoucauld intended his *Maximes* to be a purely a case, not a strictly structuralist critic is likely to realize it.

Breaking bounds

By Carol Blum

OTIS FELLOWS:
Diderot
187pp. Boston: Twayne/G. W. Hall.
\$7.95.

By the eighteenth century Europe had become a continent of empires: as Jean-Jacques Rousseau exclaimed in *Discours*: "Novadays there are no more Frenchmen, no more Germans, no more Spaniards, no even any Englishmen, despite what they say: there are only Europeans." This indifference to nationality did not survive the century, the ideal of world-citizenship, then as now, apparently lacking the violent appeal of national or ethnic identification.

The internationalism of the Enlightenment is particularly evident in the case of Denis Diderot, whose genius was so expansive that it cannot be measured as an exclusively French phenomenon. In Diderot, Otis Fellows of Columbus University, for almost thirty years the editor of the *Encyclopédie*, situates the encyclopedists as one of the key figures in the eighteenth-

century struggle to liberate thought from the domination of all governments and all religious orthodoxies. Professor Fellows's narration traces Diderot's career by translating *Œuvres complètes* from the English, how he served as an advisor to Catherine of Russia, and how his *Nouveaux Éléments de la Philosophie* were first published in Goethe's German translation.

He demonstrates how Diderot's ideas, too wide-ranging to be contained by national boundaries, could not be confined within the limits of conventional genre or subject-matter. His most accomplished works, such as *Jacques le fataliste*, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, and *Le Rêve de D'Alembert* are precisely those which continue to provoke the most controversy both as to their form and their significance.

It is characteristic of Diderot that he at once epitomizes the Enlightenment and transcends it, for while in many ways his thought and its articulation reflect the literature of an earlier period, his prestige was not clearly established until the middle of the twentieth century. In Professor Fellows's words: "Diderot, by temperament and by talent, belonged to the other tradition. His mind worked

through digression and association rather than through logical pattern. As a writer of fiction as well as a natural scientist, he heaved to the Baconian or experimental rather than to the Cartesian tradition." However well-rooted Diderot was in ways of thinking prevalent before the eighteenth century, most of his major works were so startling and so alarmingly unconventional that they have only begun to be appreciated by the cultivated public within the past thirty years. The gamy boldness to be found in much of Diderot's writing, an engagement to modern taste, long regarded him, together with an odd lot of French pornographers, to the "back of the bookshelf."

Within the brief confines of this volume, Professor Fellows has succeeded in presenting his portrait of Diderot's work with that of his life, an achievement of special importance for the understanding of a writer like Diderot who used his works as weapons in his personal and intellectual battles. Professor Fellows manages to integrate a judicious review of his subject's critical fortunes, beginning with the opinions of Diderot's contemporaries and continuing to the present day.

Reading illuminatingly

By George Steiner

BERNHARD BOSCHENSTEIN:
Lautschdörfer
Von Hildesheim an Celan, Wirkung und Vergehen
332pp. Frankfurt: Insel. DM32.

Currently, the actual exercise of literary criticism is buried under mountains of methodological gesture and jargon. The various programmes which are being argued for have one fatal thing in common. Be they structuralist, poststructuralist, deconstructionist, or simply byzantine technocracy (obsessive going with constant ad hominem invective), the new methodologies use the text. They ingest, appropriate and deconstruct it for ends that range all the way from political violence to self-therapy. The victim of this process is the author of the work under scrutiny and the reader seeking better access to it. What has become, accordingly, is that combination of negative capabilities and morality which makes a critic's exact textual knowledge a liability for the illuminating, setting, is scrupulous

car for the life of language within each particular work and, above all, the conviction, unforced, unimposed, that the writer came first and that it is a critic's job of work and privilege to assist in the creation. Bernhard Boschstein possesses these gifts and scruples to an eminent degree. To read him in the present literary climate is to draw a deep breath of fresh and bracing air.

Hilkeharin has long been the centre of Boschstein's work. The textual scholarship and knowledge of German literature which he brings to bear on his subject are formidable. We find them at work in the examinations of Hilkeharin and mountain-landscape, of the intricate relations between Klopstock and the younger masters, in a brilliant paper on the conception of the text. They ingest, appropriate and deconstruct it for ends that range all the way from political violence to self-therapy. The victim of this process is the author of the work under scrutiny and the reader seeking better access to it. What has become, accordingly, is that combination of negative capabilities and morality which makes a critic's exact textual knowledge a liability for the illuminating, setting, is scrupulous

Literary reciprocity and misprisions between Germany and France have always fascinated Boschstein (his command of both languages and literatures has been

the necessary strength of a continental authority in Greek and Latin). In this collection, he studies the impact of the French symbolists on Hofmannsthal and Goethe and the crucial influences on Paul Celan of René Char and Michaux. In turn, he marks the inception of Celan's work. At the source of both current and future German poetry, he reads the French poet whose poem "Les Phares" gives to this volume its title and subtle internal cohesion.

For the English-speaking reader, the revelation among these studies may well be that on landscape in Celan. It is the work of a real critic to guide us, Boschstein's citations are not only stunning but, beyond doubt that Celan draws on his predecessor when fashioning his own characteristic torments of assona and light. We return to both poets enriched.

This is criticism and comparative literature at its rare best. With Joan Strohman, who has analysed the very perceptive and in many cases refreshingly original, especially in their consideration of narrative viewpoint and technique.

Hail Caesar

By Filippo Donini

EILEEN ANNE MILLAR:
Napoleon in Italian Literature 1796-1821
205pp. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura. L.9,000.

The belief that under Napoleon Italy made decisive progress towards unification and independence is accepted as having been established beyond dispute. Much less known is Napoleon's influence on Italian literature.

Eileen Anne Millar has now made a study of what was written in Italy between 1796 and 1821 in praise of, or in derision of, or simply as a commentary on Napoleon's actions and rule. From the first admittance by the Jacobins and horror among supporters of the Ancien Régime, to the guarded warning by Hindemarie (Cesare ed Alessandro Imbriani) "La ritirata di Mosca" (1812) to the vilo mockery after his fall; from anonymous optimism and popular propaganda to Cuccini's masterly prose and Manzoni's great ode, Dr Millar surveys the reactions in Italian literature to Napoleon's rule. As a writer of fiction as well as a natural scientist, he heaved to the Baconian or experimental rather than to the Cartesian tradition.

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Rural realism

By Laura Lepeschy

DAVID WOOLF:
The Art of Vorge
A Study in Objectivity
115pp. Sydney University Press.
A\$4.

The aim of this book, David Woolf tells us in his introduction, is to arrive at an appreciation of Verge's concept of realism through an examination of his major works. The method used is to study in turn the two collections of short stories, *Vite del campo* and *Nuove rusticane*, and the two novels *I Molinoglia* and *Mauro-don Gualardo*, and then, by focusing on the characteristics which they have in common, to provide a definition of Verge's realism.

Mr Woolf's treatment of the works varies according to the dominant features which he finds in them. Thus the chapter on *Vite del campo* offers a close analysis of the majority of the stories, in order to examine the various ways in which Verge experiments with stylistic objectivity in his representation of the highly individual protagonists, while the chapter on *Nuove rusticane* concentrates only on *La Roba*, *Il Roverendo* and *Il povero*, taken as examples of the personal or subjective elements of the collection. The analyses are very perceptive and in many cases refreshingly original, especially in their consideration of narrative viewpoint and technique.

In the chapters on the novels too only those aspects are selected which Mr Woolf considers essential for his aim. In the study of *I Molinoglia*, which concentrates on

constant outpouring, whose rightly indicates that the novel's intention was to show when she comes to examine the long poem in which the Russian judges his behaviour does not see a deviation to a only "intentional and partial" Wolf, I shall stick to the of Foscolo, who was disappointed in the "stink of adventure".

There are also some very omissions. Among the books the anti-English propaganda by the French—an *opus* in literature than Dr Millar's length—the most famous is all. Mont's sonnet "Alla terra", which Foscolo managed to re-convert to a merely listed in the bibliography in full quotation but been appropriate.

Leopardi's beautiful page the retreat from Moscow's winter, which is all the more striking since Dr Millar has for all 112 lines of Redaelli "La ritirata di Mosca" (1812) to the vilo mockery after his fall; from anonymous optimism and popular propaganda to Cuccini's masterly prose and Manzoni's great ode, Dr Millar surveys the reactions in Italian literature to Napoleon's rule.

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The rise of the reference guide

By Edward Mendelson

DAVID K. KERMANN:
John Ashbery
A Comprehensive Bibliography
244pp. \$22.

JOSEPH WEIXLMANN:
John Barth, A Descriptive Primary and Annotated Secondary Bibliography
214pp. \$23.

MARIANNE NAULT:
Seul Bellow, His Works and His Critics
An Annotated International Bibliography
191pp. \$18.

II. B. KULKARNI:
Stephen Spender, Works and Critics
An Annotated Bibliography
264pp. \$30.
Carland Publishing.

These four author-bibliographies, which range from the superb to the execrable, represent the products of a cottage industry operating under the principles of laissez-faire. Author-bibliographies are invariably the work of individual artisans, working as their own pace for their own standards, with widely differing skills and materials. The books they produce are often Jerry-built affairs, photographed from ragged typescript or printed on only one side of the page. In contrast, for a very different sort of bibliography, the annual indexes that record not literature itself but critical works about literature, the *Library of America* has perfected standardized methods for controlled mass-production. The annual indexes to criticism—nowably those produced by the Modern Humanities Research Association or the *Modern Language Association*, the book review indexes from commercial publishers, the assembly-line products of the work of anonymous professionals, printed (with justified margins) by high-speed computers.

The imbalance between these two types of bibliography is not without its effect on literary studies. Anybody who wants to learn what academic critics or newspaper reviewers thought about the writers of this century will have no difficulty in finding where to look. Anybody who wants to know what the writers themselves had to say, especially in journals and newspapers—must trust to the varying comprehensiveness of individual author-bibliographies. Too many of the latter follow the example of the *Chicago Guide to the Study of Literature*, a brief list of the major titles, followed by pages of summaries of back reviews and standard criticism. Some of these "reference guides" to use the current parlance, although it is hard to imagine anyone referring to them except P.D. in search of recycled opinions—do not even bother to list the author's own writings.

These reference guides would have a legitimate purpose if the articles they summarize could usefully be reduced to abstracts. But many of the guides sound like this: "Typical Bellowian hero is a middle-aged man, long-suffering and a sense of his own identity with increasing awareness of his own limitations and the inherent limitations of his society. He is a man of existence, the absurdity of the struggle between material and idealistic imperatives, can be transcended by the hero's acceptance of the absurdity of his situation and his realization of a form of salvation or regeneration—however tentative—which allows him to re-enter the community of man."

This unilluminating entry is in no way typical of its genre. However much quantity a scholar wishes to anticipate his later work. One of Ashbery's schoolmates pirated two of his poems and submitted them, through a poet who taught at the school, to *Poetry*; the pirate told the teacher "his poems were his own but asked permission to be published in *Poetry*." In submitting them, "it was an odd thing for him to do," Ashbery says. The

poems were accepted, but before they appeared in print Ashbery himself, unaware of what had happened, and without using an intermediary known to the editors, sent them to *Poetry* under his own name. They were curiously rejected, and "Joel Symington's" poems duly appeared a few months later. Ashbery's pseudonymous career had other reverses as well. When he translated some romances by the name Jonas Berry the publisher had them rewritten because the "original translator" just couldn't write. Ashbery's books were seen into the blinding intended for a book by James Dickey. Possibly this was the book Jimmy Carter read before he invited Dickey to serve as his inaugural bard.

Mr Kermann does an excellent job of cataloguing recordings, or work, theatrical and film performances and other items not normally listed in bibliographies. He takes an unusual but defensible course in his treatment of critical studies: in place of the "reference guides" common in this series, he provides a list of items that will not be found in the standard indexes, a procedure that probably helped to keep the price of the book almost within reason. The book is comprehensive, it is accurate, and it is a more sober and straightforward enterprise to publish a novel than a poem. This preliminary section of the book, which lists Barth's own writings, are brief but careful and apparently complete. The larger second part of the book, the reference guide to criticism and reviews, is also a careful piece of work, but one in which Mr Weixlmann's abilities are perhaps wasted on hundreds of summaries of forgettable essays.

With Marianne Nault's *Seul Bellow* and, especially, II. B. Kulkarni's *Stephen Spender*, the *Chicago Guide* takes a sharp turn for the worse. The Bellow is an exhaustive where it should be brief, careless where it should be meticulous. The bulk of the book is devoted to an extremely detailed catalogue of the Bellow papers in the library of the University of Chicago. This catalogue consists, first, of descriptions of the paper (lined or unlined, yellow or white, etc.) on which Bellow wrote his early drafts—there are sixty pages of the sort of thing—and then a detailed listing of miscellaneous items that came to Chicago in the same cartons with the manuscripts: Bellow's 1966 tax return (but only 1966), instructions for Bellow's *Chicago* book, a typescript, "Check Book Stub" of Bellow's and one unidentified, the June 15, 1967 number of *Le Monde*, "Half a birthday card", and more. Normally libraries prepare catalogues of this kind in typewritten and place a copy in the manuscript room for the use of students; a brief summary listing is all that is needed outside the building. The publisher's announcement claims that the full catalogue is published here "for the first time." True, it should never have been published at all.

Following the manuscript catalogue, Mr Nault provides an eighty-page reference guide, a typical entry of which has been quoted above. Bellow's own publications receive, in contrast, a scant thirteen pages, or two carefully catalogued. A half-dozen items listed in the index to the *New York Times Book Review* are omitted, as are a 1975 article in *The Sunday Times* and most of Bellow's unsigned pieces in *The New Yorker*, magazines he co-edited—although the manuscript of these are carefully described later in the bibliography without any indication that they had been printed. The manuscript catalogue also includes items like "The Case of the Baffling Road" and Rebecca West's "The Roads to Communism and Back." The second part dealing with "Science and Mysticism" has pieces by A. J. Ayer, C. S. Lewis, William Empson, George Steiner, Leslie Fiedler and others. The collection is edited by Murray A. Sperber.

printed in the *Chicago Sun-Times* on September 15 of the same year—a feat which, had he achieved it, would have earned Bellow a Nobel Prize in physics as well as in literature.

Mr Kulkarni's bibliography of Stephen Spender includes a modern preface by Spender himself (as Mr Kermann's includes a cool one by Ashbery). He writes that "If one is a poet with a family to support, one does have to do things other than writes Poetry to make money." Had he written only what Mr Kulkarni records in this bibliography, his children must needs have gone begging in the streets. The list of periodical contributions includes some 500 items from sixty-one periodicals; a few hours in the bibliography room and bookstacks of a good library produced a list of over a hundred periodicals alone—instances of a selective refusal to index would be especially useful, although possibly not to Mr Kulkarni, who ignored many of the existing indexes. Mr Kulkarni's own sections are not much better, in general, than the contributions by Spender has forty-seven items, many of them anthologies of reprints that do not belong here at all; and one book is included twice because Mr Kulkarni did not notice that it was published under two different titles. A morning in a library brought twenty-five omissions to light, and there are surely others. Even the list of Spender's own books has some omissions, like a book of poems which Spender's 1964 *Selected Poems* is not a second edition of a 1938 volume with the same title.

Mr Kulkarni frequently lists 'the American second edition of a book on the first, and omits the British first edition entirely. When he manages to list the British edition, he is sometimes wrong. The *Chicago Guide* is not a second edition of a 1938 volume with the same title, and there are surely others. Even the list of Spender's own books has some omissions, like a book of poems which Spender's 1964 *Selected Poems* is not a second edition of a 1938 volume with the same title.

The omissions in this bibliography are perhaps the oddest thing about it. For most of Spender's books Mr Kulkarni provides quotations from the dust-jacket blurbs ("The wrapper describes Spender as foremost among the younger generation of writers in English") as well as comments like this one on Spender's British Council pamphlet on Shelley: "It may also be noted that Spender has been described as the Shelley of the twentieth century." Among the queries in a list of omissions, reprinting Spender's poems is this note: "The editor proclaims that the poems included in this anthology have been judged solely on their merits—evidently an uncommon manner."

Arthur Koestler: *A Collection of Critical Essays* (189pp. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. £7.15). Paperback, £3.15. It is a recent addition to the Twentieth Century Views series, whose aim is "to present the best in contemporary critical writing on the major authors, providing a twentieth-century perspective on their changing status." The first part on "Politics and Literature" includes George Orwell's review of *Spanish Fictions* by St Louis Post-Despatch, Dec. '60, whose publication, if any, would not have been difficult to trace through a microfiche. The list of Bellow's publications is arranged alphabetically, and this is a bit strange, as the entries are listed as appearing in *The Observer* on December 8, 1968, and then

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"Wallace Fowle is a humanist who gratefully affirms the role of his bi-lingual literary university, and aesthetic experience in shaping his world, a world of high and exigent values. We rarely need to be reminded, as he reminds us, that art and literature can shape and satisfy a sensibility." *Germaine Greer*

"Wallace Fowle gives the history of the preparation of the heart and mind which make the scholar. Many novellists have written about their own histories, and even about the creative process. Selkous has this been done by a scholar of Professor Fowle's stature." *Joy Morris*

Person, Place, and Thing in Henry James's Novels

Charles R. Anderson

"An eloquent and important book. The author's general erudition, his graceful style, his specialized knowledge, all coalesce into a revelation of certain aspects of James's fictional practice that has never before been done, so far as I know, in quite this way or with quite this new reasonableness. Anderson's exposition of the developing Jamesian use of picture and scene is startlingly original. His demonstration of James's fictional adaptations has never before been given quite the thoroughness, quite the persuasiveness, that Anderson gives them. And it is precisely that demonstrated interaction of those two areas—James's transformation, say, of his factual knowledge of the Impressionist painters into the Impressionist techniques of his fiction, to take a single example—that gives this impressive volume its unique distinction." *William T. Stafford*

Poetry in America

Expression and its Values in the Times of Bryant, Whitman, and Pound

Bernard Duffey

Bernard Duffey has written a history of literary expression rather than a history of literary persons or reputations. He divides his account into three phases: the early 19th century, the period of coherence; the late 19th century, the period of incoherence; and the 20th century, in which poetic invention and experimentation brought a radicalization of the poetic force itself—poetic worth was localized in the poetry's own means and ends.

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